

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A mower deck bumper comprising first and second ends and a bend section between the first and second ends, at least the first end of the mower deck bumper being configured for mounting to a mower deck so as to position the bend section over at least a portion of trim surface of the mower deck, the bend section being spaced apart from the trim surface when the mower deck bumper is in a rest state:

wherein the mower deck bumper being is configured to absorb forces when brought into contact with an object that ~~would otherwise contact~~ moves the bend section towards the trim surface.

2. (currently amended) The mower deck bumper of claim 1, further comprising at least one aperture formed in the first end that is sized to receive a fastener for securing the first end of the mower deck bumper to the mower deck.

3. (original) The mower deck bumper of claim 1, wherein the first and second ends are configured for mounting the mower deck bumper to the mower deck.

4. (original) The mower deck bumper of claim 1, wherein the mower deck bumper comprises an ultra high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMW-PE) material.

5. (currently amended) A method of protecting an exposed surface of a mower deck with a mower deck bumper, the method comprising the steps of:

forming the mower deck bumper with a bend section between first and second ends of the mower deck bumper; and

securing at least one end of the mower deck bumper to the mower deck so as to position the bend section adjacent to and spaced apart from a trim surface of the mower deck, whereby the bend section is configured and arranged to engage objects in close proximity to the trim

surface that would otherwise contact the trim surface and bend towards the trim surface upon contact with the objects.

6. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the securing step includes securing the first and second ends of the mower deck bumper to the mower deck.

7. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the forming step includes pre-forming the bend section using a drape molding process.

8. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the forming step includes forming the mower deck bumper from an ultra high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMW-PE) material.

9. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the forming step includes forming a curved contact surface at the second end of the mower deck bumper, and the securing step includes securing the first end to the mower deck so as to contact the curved surface with the trim surface of the mower deck.

10. (currently amended) A mower assembly, comprising:
a mower deck having a trim surface; and

a mower deck bumper having first and second ends and a bend section, the first end of the mower deck bumper being coupled to the mower deck, with the bend section covering at least a portion of the trim surface, and the second end of the mower deck bumper maintaining sliding engagement with the mower deck;

wherein the mower deck bumper is configured and arranged to engage objects in close proximity to the mower deck that would otherwise contact the trim surface, and the second end of the mower deck bumper is configured to slide relative the mower deck while maintaining contact with the mower deck when the mower deck bumper engages the objects.

11. (original) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein the bend section is spaced apart laterally from the trim surface.

12. (original) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein the trim surface is oriented substantially vertically and the mower deck bumper is aligned substantially parallel to the trim surface.

13. (original) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein the mower deck includes a side edge defining an outer most side of the mower, and the mower deck bumper is coupled to the side edge.

14. (original) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein the first end of the mower deck bumper is coupled to the mower deck.

15. (currently amended) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein ~~the first and second ends of the mower deck bumper are coupled to the mower deck~~ the second end of the mower deck bumper includes a first portion that maintains contact with the mower deck, and a second portion that extends away from and is not in contact with the mower deck.

16. (original) The mower assembly of claim 10, wherein the bend section is resilient.

17. (currently amended) A mower deck bumper kit, comprising:
a package;

a mower deck bumper positioned within the package, the mower deck bumper having first and second ends and a flexible bend section interposed between the first and second ends, the mower deck bumper and being configured to mount to a mower deck with the bend section positioned adjacent to and spaced apart from ~~to cover~~ at least a portion of a trim surface of a mower deck;

a fastener positioned within the package and configured to secure the mower deck bumper to the mower deck.

18. (currently amended) A bumper member suited for use with a motorized lawn care vehicle, the bumper member comprising first and second ends and a bend section oriented

between the first and second ends, at least one end of the bumper member being adapted and configured for mounting to the vehicle so as to position the bend section ~~over~~ adjacent to but not engaging an exposed surface of the vehicle when the bumper member is in a rest state, the bumper member being configured to absorb forces by bending toward the exposed surface when the bumper member is brought into contact with an object that would otherwise contact the exposed surface.